1: Glacken E-5 (1951-1952) 1953 AC7 Okinawa AC7

Obtaining News of a Larger World

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While it is an error to think of villages as isolated social and economic units, it would be a mistake also to fail to mention the existing obstacles to communication and the dissemination of news.

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There are virtually no radio sets in any of these villages, except in the schools and sometimes in a village office. Home radio sets invariably need repairs. In Hanashiro, which has no electricity, there were 3 radios, two of which did not work. There were 4 in Hinatogawa, with one at least not working, and six in Matsuda, three of which were in the primary school, one in the village office. In these villages there is electricity from about 6:30 to 10:30 in the winter and from 7 to 11 PM in the summer. The radio is not an important direct medium for obtaining news. If they can, villagers tune in Japanese stations for news, music, and entertainment. There is a need for simple and cheap means of reaching rural areas by radio.

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Newspapers are more important media. But in late 1951 and early 1952, there were 5 newspaper subscribers in Hanashiro, one going to the village office where it could be read by all, 14 in Hinatogawa, and about 20 in Matsuda, reduced from a previous 40 by an increase in the subscription rate. The barbershop in Matsuda had a newspaper. Schools and the township and village offices subscribe. It is difficult to estimate actual circulation. My own observation is that newspaper reading under these conditions is casual and intermittent, that newspapers are read consistently only by the village officials, school teachers, and the regular subscribers. News from Naha, the other Ryukyu islands, and from international sources is disseminated largely by word of mouth. Local readers make their reading a subject of conversation. There is no lack of interest in broader questions and in international events. The negotiations leading up to the Japanese peace treaty were followed with great interest by many villagers in Matsuda. [203]

Japanese magazines, particularly movie magazines, are popular despite their high cost. They are widely read not only by the young, but by older men and women, including school teachers.

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Telephones are not a part of home life. There were two privately installed field telephones in Hinatogawa, but no private telephones in the other villages. The village office, the post office are equipped with phones.

484 [494]

The possibilities of obtaining more direct knowledge of other parts of Okinawa island have increased since the war. One can travel by public transportation from the southern part of the island to the extreme north in a reasonable time and not too uncomfortably. Provincial attitudes still remain. Persons in the southern villages

2:Maretzki & Maretzki E-5 (1954-1955) 1963 AC7 Okinawa AC7
Taira

tion, a frame wood building, and the main store. On the eastern end of the village the road opens into a little square in front of the simple, open prayer house with a small concrete shrine in back, housing three sacred stones. Beyond these is the township office crowned by a mighty pine tree of tremendous and symmetric proportions, acclaimed by Taira people to be the oldest existing pine in Okinawa. Across from the office are the post office and the dispensary.

Closer inspection of the village shows former house sites which were not rebuilt. Some still have empty concrete shells or single concrete walls and abandoned pigsties or storage sheds. Some of the vacant lots are used as potato fields, others as play areas, the favorite being a large house lot surrounded by a concrete wall, near the main store.

Houses are set back a short distance from the roads and paths, and most face south. In spite of the hedges and trees, the house is easily accessible from the street—its orientation is therefore toward the community as a whole and, as will be seen later, open to visitors who can enter freely without going through winding garden paths and knocking on doors or entering through long corridors and passages. Each house lot is small, ranging from 1300 to 6050 square feet. Houses are set so close to each other that neighborly conversations from one to the other can be conducted without leaving one's premises. Although some privacy is attained by the hibiscus hedges and fences, few secrets can be kept from neighbors.

There are several focal areas where people frequently meet and interact. The main store is a geographical center. Its two bulletin boards make it a natural congregating point. The banyan tree, overshadowing the village office and the lower water tank, is another such place, and on any day of the year scores of children can be found on or under it. In prewar times it was flanked by important structures, but now the empty lots, which are adjacent, form a green which is used on good days for village meetings.

South of this green, and close to the water, stands the old warehouse, a concrete structure with tile roof which once served as a storage center for agricultural products shipped south by boat; now it serves as a village meeting playground, especially on rainy days. The open space around it, bordering on the sea wall, is also used as a play area and as a gathering place for young adults. Here people prepare firewood for sale and stack it to be picked up by the village truck. Houses once stood near the 10-foot sea wall but were not rebuilt after the war.

To the north of the store lies the upper water tank. Until several standing faucets were installed in 1955, this used to be another place where people met frequently. Water is diverted from a stream a mile

2:Maretzki & Maretzki · E-5 (1954-1955) 1963 AC7 Okinawa AC7
Taira

666 tion itself is arranged and supervised by an *ad hoc* committee. In 1955 written ballots were cast and counted immediately so that the result was known within a few minutes after the last ballot was in.

622 In contrast to a position in the township administration, which carries high status, equivalent to that of a teacher, the village headman's job is considered a community service and carries little prestige. This does not mean that the headman should not be an individual of high qualities. He must be at least 25 years old; he has to have sufficient education, especially knowledge of Japanese writing characters, to read government documents and to do the required clerical work; he has to be a good accountant and must be proficient in working with the abacus, since all tax collections are supervised by him; he must be community minded and able to enforce regulations in a friendly but efficient way. The rewards are small, the salary less than that of most township officials. The office is held most frequently by young men who have not been out of high school too long. Most recent headmen are between 25 and 30 years of age. Serving in this office may mark the beginning of an administrative career, either in the township office, in the village store, or in business outside Taira. The clerk, appointed
624 by the headmen to assist in village administration, is also a young man. He too is likely to be headed toward an administrative career.

621 Each village is subdivided into wards, set up originally by Japanese
624 administration to effect greater control over families through the warden. He is a subagent of the headman, and at present he functions
[203] mainly as a channel for communications, a useful function in a village like Taira, which covers a large geographical area. Regulations, village meetings, and special events are announced through the warden, and he is often called on to collect delinquent taxes. However, he has little authority and functions more as a neighbor who takes care of necessary contacts between residents and the village administration. Ward members elect him to his honorary office for a one-year term.

623 Village affairs are discussed and legislative action concerning the village initiated by the village council. This group is now partly elected, partly composed of holders of essential offices, such as heads of associations, members of the township assembly, and township officials who live in Taira. The 26 members of the Council are responsible for measures affecting the community, and the headman relies heavily on their advice. Most councilmen are middle aged; few are over 50 years
[575] old. Since the head of the Women's Association and the nurse are members, there are at least two female representatives. The youngest councilman is usually the head of the Young People's Association.

623 It is apparent that leadership in the community is always exercised
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178 369 The new roads and buses have done much to break down the isolation of the village; the physical barriers separating village from town have greatly diminished. This has enabled the rural dweller to enter the labor markets of the urban areas and to expand greatly the markets for his products.

178 20 Communications Equally as impressive as the changes in transportation have been those in communications. Today newspapers, radios, telephones, and movies are making their influences felt in the country. Prior 178 to the war there were five motion-picture theaters on Okinawa; today there 546 are fifty-seven, and approximately one-third of the films shown are of [177] Western origin. Though the theaters are concentrated in the towns and cities, the young people of neighboring farm villages often make regular use of them. Some of the young people in Kanegusuku go to the theaters in Itoman several times a week.

178 204 Everyone asserts that newspapers are becoming more common in the rural areas. In the isolated village of Oku at the northern end of Okinawa the mayor informed us that nearly 90% of the houses subscribe regularly to a newspaper.

178 207 203 In Kanegusuku seventy of its 103 houses obtained radios this year under the group listening system. A number of those who were unable to secure radios (due to a lack of equipment) are hoping to do so in the near future. In some villages the group listening system has been utilized as a public address system for official announcements. This has greatly simplified the problem of conveying information or orders to the villagers. Pitts made use of this system on Henza Shima to explain his purpose in studying there. In this same village the regular Shuri broadcasts are sometimes replaced with Okinawan music played on a phonograph owned by the village. On Izena Shima the system is used to announce the arrivals and departures of the two ferryboats which serve the island.

The radio has been eagerly received in all communities which the author visited and has been instrumental in bringing the villagers into contact with the outside world.

177 178 241 Agriculture and the Rural Economy Major changes in Okinawan agriculture have been slight. Improvements have been made in yields as the result of scientific research conducted by the Japanese, a few new minor crops have been introduced, modern fertilizers have been made available, and the system of land tenure was radically altered by the Japanese; but the basic agricultural methods have remained the same. The major crops have not changed though their ratios have fluctuated, and most importantly, farm holdings remain as scattered and heavily fragmented as ever. There is at present no trend or even a suggestion of a trend toward consolidation of holdings nor is there any indication of a lessening of land pressure. So long as the farms remain small, fragmented, and widely scattered, there will be no possibility of using machinery or scientific methods. The present system of intensive gardening does produce a high yield per acre, but it also demands a large labor supply.